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NUGGET

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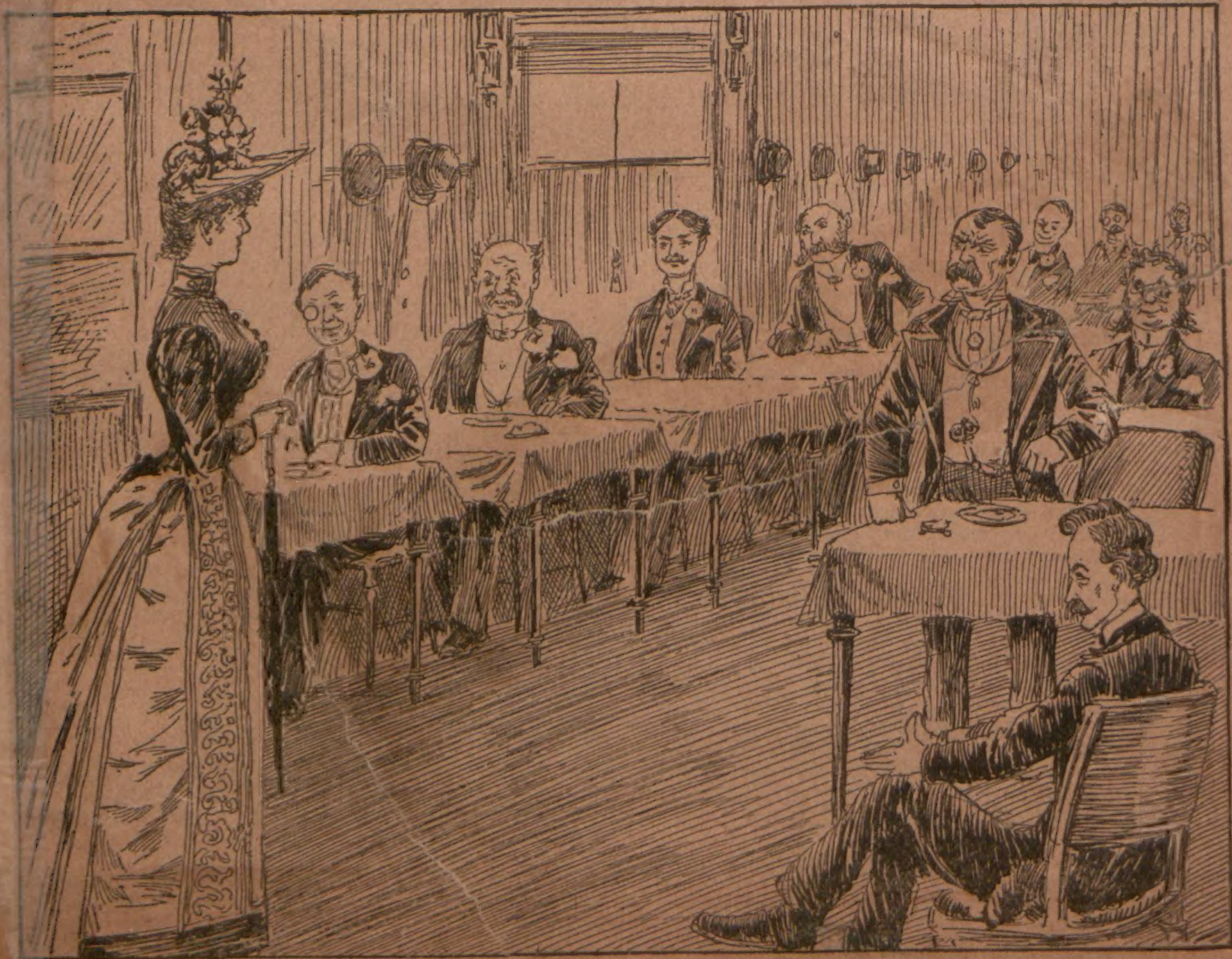
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SWIPES IN BOSTON.

By "FRANK,"

Author of "Smart Aleck," Etc.



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CHAPTER I.

SWIPES IN BOSTON.

Swipes and his two friends, Noodleheimer and the professor, went to the Grand Central Depot, where they entered one of the cars of a train about to start for Boston.

All went well until the train had nearly reached New Haven. Then Swipes felt that he could not keep quiet any longer. He had not had a "racket" of any sort for four or five hours, and the monotony was beginning to wear on him. So, leaving the two old men engaged in conversation, he mingled with the other passengers.

His two traveling companions ought to have known, when they saw him engaged in earnest and apparently confidential conversation with an elderly maiden lady on the other side of the aisle, that there was mischief afoot.

But they were so busily engaged in talking about the old professor's improved prospects, and in laying plans for a series of colossal "rackets" as soon as the old man should gain possession of his fortune, that they had no time to think anything about the youth.

We must now, badly as it harrows up our feelings, repeat the conversation that took place between Swipes and the old maid.

"It is a lovely afternoon, is it not, miss?" said our hero, dropping into the seat by the old lady's side and gazing into her face with an expression of countenance so frank and engaging that no one not intimately acquainted with his peculiar methods of killing time could possibly have suspected him of any evil intent. Certainly the old maid did not, for, after a glance at his face, she replied:

"It is, indeed. But why do you call me miss, little boy?"

"Because I can see that you are far too young to be married," replied the reckless Swipes.

His venerable companion giggled hysterically.

"Now you stop!" she ejaculated. "I think you are awful. You know you don't mean one word of that."

Swipes' face wore a shocked look as he said:

"Surely, miss, you cannot think me capable of telling a deliberate falsehood?"

"I hope you would not," said the old lady.

"Well, I should hope not, too. No, indeed! The fact is, I am thinking some of studying for the ministry and, going to the South Sea Islands as a missionary."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, miss. Are you traveling far?"

"To Boston."

"Indeed? I should think you would be afraid to travel alone; you are so young."

Perhaps the old maid, who must have been at least fifty, suspected Swipes for a moment of "guying" her, for she looked very sharply into his face. But it wore such a serious, concerned expression that if she had had any such thought she must have banished it at the instant.

"Yes, I am afraid a little," she admitted, kittenishly.

"Yes, I should think you would be. Why, if I did not have those two gentlemen over there with me I should be awfully frightened. I am of a very timid nature, and have always been that way."

"Is one of those gentlemen your papa?" inquired the lady.

"No," replied Swipes, "but they have both of them been second fathers to me, so to speak. I would ask them to protect you, too, only I don't think it would do, the circumstances are so peculiar."

"I don't exactly understand you," said the old maid, curiously.

"Do not press me for an explanation," said Swipes, pretending to be a good deal agitated. "They would kill me if I told."

"Why, what can you mean?" squeaked the lady. "There could not be any harm in telling me."

Swipes knew well enough that when a woman, and particularly an elderly unmarried woman, tries to find out a secret, she is going to succeed every time; but he thought he would tease her a little longer, so he continued to refuse with such an air of mystery that she could hardly sit still for curiosity.

At last she said:

"Now, Swipes"—she had found out his name by this time—"you must not think that I am actuated by a spirit of idle curiosity, but I feel sure, from your manner, that this secret is one which, as a fellow-passenger of those men, I ought to know, and I insist that you tell me."

"Oh, well, if you insist," said Swipes, "of course I have got to tell you. Why didn't you say that before?"

"Of course you have got to tell me," cried Miss Spriggs, as the old lady was named. "Out with it, now, little boy. Do not be afraid."

"Oh, yes, I'm afraid!" whined Swipes, with a terrified glance at Mr. Noodleheimer. "Please don't ask me anything more about it."

"But I will, I must. If you do not tell me at once, I shall be compelled to call the conductor and lay the whole case before him."

By this time the old maid was pretty well "wrought up," and her unprincipled companion thought it time to give her the alleged information that she was working so hard to get.

"Well, then, Miss Spriggs," he said, "I'll tell you all, but on your head are the consequences."

"Go on, go on!"

"You notice what a peculiar complexion the smaller one of those two gentlemen has?"

The professor, we should mention, if we have not before, was extremely sallow.

"Yes, yes!" gasped Miss Spriggs.

"Now, does not a good look at his face lead you to suspect the awful truth?"

"Heavens! what do you mean?"

"But he doesn't look so very bad, after all," continued Swipes, thoughtfully. "I don't believe that any one would suspect, unless I told them, that those two old men are just out of the yellow fever hospital, do you?"

Miss Spriggs waited to hear no more. With a shriek she arose, and without waiting to reply to the youth's query, rushed out of the car.

Swipes watched her with a sweet, sad smile, murmuring to himself:

"Now, how hasty some people are. I didn't say that the professor and Mr. Noodleheimer had been in the hospital; I only asked a little simple question, and she ought not to have skipped out in that manner."

Then he arose and went back to his two friends, feeling quite sure that this would not be the last of the matter. And he was right. There was a friend of Miss Spriggs in the car, a gentleman, who had witnessed her sudden departure with wonder, and who now took it into his head to follow her into the next car and learn the cause of her evident agitation.

He did so, and the old maid repeated to him all that Swipes had told her, and a good deal more, for such stories never lose anything in the repetition.

He returned to his own car, filled with horror and indignation, that two yellow fever patients should be permitted to thus endanger the lives of so many persons. He repeated what he had heard, with numerous variations, and within ten minutes every one in the car knew all about it, except the professor and Mr. Noodleheimer.

"What are all the passengers staring at us for?" asked the professor, a few minutes later. "And I wonder why so many of them are leaving the car."

As he spoke nearly all the remaining passengers arose to their feet, and, gazing at Noodleheimer and the professor with looks indicative of horror and disgust, made a rush for the door.

Swipes' scheme had begun to work.

"This is an outrage—nothing less!" yelled one man, shaking his fist at the amazed couple. "You two fellows

ought to be ejected from this train without a moment's delay."

"Vell, py cracious," cried Mr. Noodleheimer, in utter bewilderment, "vat vas der madder py me?"

As he spoke, the conductor entered and approached, an expression on his face which showed that he meant business, but he did not want to come too near the old men and risk becoming infected with the dread disease. Standing about ten feet away, he shouted, as he pulled the bell-rope:

"Now, see here! I'm going to stop this train, and I want you two to get off in double-quick time. See?"

Mr. Noodleheimer and the professor stared at him with wide-open mouths.

"Vas you crazy?" demanded the former, at last.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" stormed Professor Gallus, while Swipes began to sob bitterly.

Now, if the conductor had been of a less excitable and impulsive nature explanations might have ensued, and Swipes have been placed in a somewhat awkward position.

But he disdained to reply; and, the train, having now been brought to a stand-still, he beckoned to a brakeman to come and assist him in ejecting the two unlucky old men. This was done in very quick time, and Swipes followed his friends, his handkerchief to his eyes.

"This shall prove the most expensive day's work this company has ever done," roared the professor, picking himself up from the spot where he had fallen, and digging about a quart of sand out of his right ear. "This outrage shall be known throughout the length and breadth of the land. The idea of treating me, Sir Cicero Gallus, an English baronet, with such indignity. I'll—I'll ruin this road, that's what I'll do."

"Yes, I would strongly advise you to do so, Sir Cicero," said our hero. "But what do you suppose all this means? Why could those bold bad men have us put off?"

"I am at a loss to imagine. But I'll find out—trust me for that. Just wait till I get my money."

"Yes, I would advise you to wait till you get your money before you do anything about it," said the youth. "But there's no use standing here any longer; we've got to foot it to New Haven and wait there for the next train, so the sooner we're off the better, for it's growing dark."

This was good advice, and Swipes' companions decided to follow it. Mr. Noodleheimer did not like to walk much, and the professor had never distinguished himself as a pedestrian; but there was no help for it, and off they started.

The old men were pretty well played out when they arrived at New Haven, but Swipes was as fresh as a daisy, and all ready for another "racket," if an opportunity presented itself.

Another eastward-bound train arrived about ten minutes after they reached New Haven, and the professor, who was wild to get to Boston at the earliest possible moment, insisted upon going on, although Mr. Noodleheimer would gladly have rested until morning.

As luck would have it, every berth in the two sleeping-cars attached to the train was taken, and the luckless travelers were obliged to sit up all night. This was not so bad for Swipes, but it was very "rough" upon his companions, who, as the reader will remember, had spent the previous night in a cell in a police station.

And to add to their sufferings, Swipes, whenever one of them fell into a doze, would manage to awaken him in some way. The result of this and of various other little eccentricities in which the youth saw fit to indulge during that memorable trip, but which we have not space to detail, was that by the time they reached Boston the professor and his Teutonic friend were nervous wrecks.

But nevertheless Professor Gallus braced up, for he believed that he was soon to meet Mr. Blackstone Briggs, the English lawyer, whose letter had summoned him to Boston.

"We'll make up for all we have suffered in a few hours," he told Mr. Noodleheimer; and, consoling themselves with this reflection, they wended their way to the Parker House.

"It's too early to wake up Mr. Briggs," said the profes-

sor, when he and Mr. Noodleheimer had been shown to their private parlor—for nothing less than an elaborate suite of rooms would do for them. "Besides, I must present myself to this lawyer in the style befitting an English baronet, and my toilet will take time."

It did; and it was nearly ten o'clock when the professor rang for a hall-boy, and directed him to take his card to Mr. Briggs and inform that gentleman that he was ready to see him.

"Briggs?" said the boy, doubtfully. "I don't think there's any such person stopping here, sir."

"Nonsense!" said the professor, haughtily. "They will give you the number of his room at the office. Go."

The boy departed, but in a few minutes he returned, saying:

"I was right, sir. There's no one of the name of Briggs stopping here just now."

"This is very singular," said Professor Gallus, in perplexity.

"Here's a letter for you, sir," added the boy.

"Ah," said the old man, "this will doubtless explain all."

It did. It was the composition of Swipes, and it read as follows:

"DEAR PROFESSOR GALLUS:—Did you ever get left?

"BLACKSTONE BRIGGS."

"What the mischief does this mean?" gasped the professor.

Then it slowly dawned upon him that he had been the victim of a trick.

"I have been made the sport of some designing scoundrel!" he yelled, having exhibited the letter to Noodleheimer and Swipes.

"Yah," said the Dutchman, "somepody haf ein chob put oob py you alreatty."

"Oh, this is infamous!" wailed Swipes. "Then you are not Sir Cicero Gallus after all."

"Und you haf not dot money got," howled Mr. Noodleheimer. "Py chimminy, I haf lost mine zwei hundred tollars."

"Bah! what are your paltry two hundred dollars to the millions that I believed mine?" moaned the professor, pacing the floor with his hand pressed to his forehead.

"Dey vas a good teal more, py cracious!" shouted the angry Teuton. "Aber, brofessor, you vill bay me pack?"

"Certainly I will, as soon as I am able. In the meantime I am bound to hunt down the wretch who has played this trick upon me and avenge myself."

"Oh, how I do hope you will find him!" cried Swipes, rolling his eyes. "Do you suspect any one, professor?"

"I do not, for I was not aware that I had either a friend or an enemy in Boston. But I will find him, never fear."

He did not, however, although he spent all day in making inquiries.

"Nefer mind, brofessor," said Noodleheimer, consolingly, "ve vill dink no more abowit dot to-night. I brobose dot ve go owit und baint der down ret."

Of course Professor Gallus agreed with alacrity, and they did, indeed, paint the town a deep vermilion that evening. They returned to the hotel at about two o'clock in the morning and aroused Swipes and most of the other guests from their slumbers by their warbling of "The Sweet By and By."

When they arose, at nearly noon, they were badly broken up, and decided to return to New York by the next train. They did so, and we wish we could give some of the details of their journey, during which Swipes had considerable fun; but space forbids.

For some days after their return things went along in the usual way; nothing of special note occurring until one morning about a week later, when an opportunity for another racket was given Swipes.

At about ten o'clock on the morning in question our hero received a visit from one Mr. Archimedes Bluster, a professional politician, who lived directly opposite the saloon.

As soon as he entered, Swipes saw that he was a good deal excited.

"Swipes," he began, leaning confidentially upon the bar, "I believe that you are my friend."

"Of course I am," cried the youth.

"Will you do me a favor—if you are well paid?"

"Certainly, Mr. Bluster."

"Very good. Now I will tell you a secret. I have reason to believe that my wife is carrying on a flirtation with Noodleheimer and with others in this neighborhood."

"Is it possible?" cried Swipes, pretending to be greatly surprised. But he was not, for he and every one else in the street knew that Mr. Bluster was intensely jealous of his wife.

"Yes. Now I want you to watch Mrs. Bluster. You can do so without being suspected, and you have a good chance. Do you agree?"

"I guess so. You said something about a consideration, think?"

"Certainly I did, Swipes. I do not expect you to work for nothing. You shall be liberally rewarded. Here is a quarter for you. Ah, here comes Noodleheimer; he must not see me. I will call in again this evening, and you may then have some news for me."

And he hastily slipped out of the side door.

"This is what he calls liberal pay, is it?" muttered Swipes in a tone of disgust. "Well, that's the worst I ever heard. There's no use talking, I've got to get some fun out of this. But how?"

Of course, it did not take our ingenious young friend long to think up a scheme. The fact that he did not like Mrs. Bluster, who had offended him in several ways, made the task all the more congenial.

That afternoon he wrote notes to about a dozen men in the immediate neighborhood, including Mr. Noodleheimer and Professor Gallus. The contents of each of these communications were as follows:

"Please meet me at G——'s restaurant to-morrow at 3 P. M. I am very anxious to have a short private conversation with you. Wear a rose in the button-hole of your coat, and let your handkerchief protrude a little way from your pocket, so that I shall have no difficulty in identifying you as soon as I enter. Say nothing of this to a living soul. I cannot now reveal my name, but will simply sign myself
"BIRDIE."

When Bluster called that evening Swipes told him that if he wanted to learn more about the manner in which his wife was accustomed to spend her time he could go to G——'s restaurant the following day at three.

"I am not at liberty to say more," he added, "but I have been doing some fine detective work, as you will find."

With this the enraged husband was forced to be satisfied, and he took his leave, promising to be on hand at the restaurant at the appointed hour.

"Do not be surprised if you see me there," said Swipes as they parted. "In my capacity of detective I may have to be present."

The next morning he sent a note to Mrs. Bluster, telling her that if she was curious to know something about the movements of her husband when he was away from home she would do well to visit G——'s restaurant at three that afternoon. He knew that she was nearly as jealous as her husband, and would be sure to be on hand.

At half-past two Swipes put a rose about the size of a small cabbage in his button-hole, and started for the restaurant. He expected to have lots of fun, and he was not disappointed.

He found all of his victims on hand, and a pretty uneasy looking lot they were as they surveyed each other and wondered what it all meant.

The professor and Noodleheimer were seated on opposite sides of the room, glaring at each other, and Bluster, who was the only man in the restaurant who did not have a rose in his button-hole, was on hand and evidently in a white heat of rage.

Swipes seated himself in a corner, unobserved by either Mr. Noodleheimer or the professor, and awaited developments.

He did not have to wait long, for he had scarcely taken his place when Mrs. Bluster entered, heavily veiled.

"Now," thought Swipes, "there'll be a circus."
There was.

CHAPTER II.

A BUSY DAY FOR SWIPES.

If Mr. Archimedes Bluster, Professor Gallus, Mr. Noodleheimer, and Swipes' other victims had had time they would in all probability have "dropped" to the fact that a job had been put up on them. But Swipes had not given them a chance to think much about the matter. He had so carefully timed the affair that scarcely three minutes elapsed between the arrival of the dozen would-be "mashers" and the infuriated husband.

It was while the unfortunate men sat staring at each other and wondering what it all meant that Mrs. Bluster sailed into the restaurant, where she expected to find her husband at lunch with another lady.

All eyes were at once fixed upon her, and the face of the victims assumed a more or less fascinating smile.

Each man was certain that the appointment had been made with him and him alone, and that it was a mere coincidence that a number of other individuals, each with a rose in his button-hole, were present.

Mr. Noodleheimer's expressive countenance wore a smile that extended nearly round to the back of his neck, and Professor Gallus' features were twisted into a grin that rooted the lady to the spot with amazement and horror, if she had been unfortunate enough to see it.

But she didn't. She had eyes for only one person present, and that was her husband. She "spotted" him the moment she entered, and waltzed up to him with an expression of countenance that showed that she meant business, and business of the most decided sort.

She looked right and left for the lady whom she had expected to find with her spouse, but of course she didn't see her.

"Where is the hussy?" she cried in a voice that could be heard from one end of the restaurant to the other. "Ah, Archimedes Bluster, you see I've found you out. She hasn't come yet, I suppose. Well, I'll wait till she does."

Amazement kept Mr. Bluster dumb for a few moments; then he burst out with:

"Miserable woman! do not think to pull the wool over my eyes by any such transparent device as that. You are quick-witted, but you cannot deceive Archimedes Bluster."

"What do you mean?" snapped the astonished Mrs. Bluster; and the entire roomful of men waited breathlessly for the reply.

"I mean," shouted the politician, becoming more and more excited every moment, "that I know all."

"All!" demanded the lady, "all what?"

"That you are here to meet your lover—your lovers. I should say, for here are at least a dozen, every mother's son of whom shall answer to me."

Professor Gallus turned very pale, Mr. Noodleheimer glanced uneasily toward the door, and most of the other men looked as if they wished they were far, far away.

"Nor can you pull the wool over my eyes," shrieked Mrs. Bluster. "I know that you are here to meet another woman, and I will not leave this place until I have seen her."

"My dear sir, my dear madam," began the proprietor of the restaurant, coming up at that moment, "reflect! this is a public place. A scene like this in my restaurant——"

"Confound your measly restaurant," bawled the infuriated Mr. Bluster. "I'll clean it out for you inside of ten seconds. Give me room."

Then he struck out for the man nearest him, who happened at that moment to be Professor Gallus. He hit him between the eyes, and down went the old man. As he fell he clutched the table-cloth, and the next moment he was buried beneath a pile of broken glass and crockery.

The other men made a rush for the door, but the landlord got there before them and turned the key.

"Not one of you leaves this place," he howled, "until he has paid his bill."

"But we have no money to eat," pleaded Mr. Noodleheimer.

"That makes no difference; you've all of you ordered something, and you've got to pay up."

"That just suits me," roared Bluster. "Keep 'em all in here till you see me polish 'em off one by one—or half a dozen at a time if it suits 'em any better."

Then the serious business of the day began. Mr. Bluster was in his element when he was in the midst of a "scrimmage," and on this occasion he had a highly enjoyable time. He struck out right and left, and every blow told.

A few of his opponents made efforts to defend themselves, but the politician had had more experience in this sort of thing than all of them put together, and he was enough for them every time.

And Swipes did all that lay in his power to make the occasion one long to be remembered. While, for the benefit of his employer and the professor, he feigned intense terror, and added to the horror of the scene by his unearthly howls, he was in the thick of the fray, tripping up the victims of his "racket," upsetting tables, and

there had been a mistake all round, and he chipped in with:

"Why, certainly he did not, Mrs. Bluster. How could you think such a thing of Mr. Bluster?"

"I did not address my remark to you, boy."

"Nevertheless, he has answered it correctly," said her husband. "And now let me ask you how you dare look me in the face after making an appointment to lunch with no less than a dozen different men?"

"Are you an idiot, Mr. Bluster?" said the lady. "I have made no appointment to lunch with any one. Can't you see that we have both been the victims of an infamous trick?"

"What?" roared the politician.

"Yes," interposed Swipes, rolling his eyes and putting on a look of the deepest grief, "I fear that Mrs. Bluster is right in her suspicions, and that we have all been the victims of some unprincipled practical joker."

"Why," cried Mr. Bluster, "what do you mean, Swipes?"

"I mean," returned Swipes, wiping his eyes, "that I believe that I was misinformed about this affair: that the whole thing was a trick. I was led to believe that



THE PASSENGERS AROSE TO THEIR FEET, AND WITH LOOKS OF HORROR AND DISGUST MADE A RUSH FOR THE DOOR.

otherwise behaving in a manner for which we can offer no justification, but which we are obliged in our capacity of historian to faithfully chronicle.

At last, when he saw that if this sort of thing were continued a few minutes longer his establishment would be a total wreck, the proprietor of the restaurant decided to waive the point he had raised; and throwing open the door, he shrieked:

"Get out of here, every one of you. Start quick, now, or I'll hand you all over to the police, if it ruins my place."

The dozen unfortunate men stood not on the order of their going, but went at once. In about five seconds the restaurant was empty of all, save Mr. and Mrs. Bluster and Swipes.

The politician, flushed and triumphant, turned to his wife.

"I'm not done with them yet—I can tell you that, madam."

"You are a fool, Archimedes Bluster," asserted the lady, emphatically. "See here, did you, or did you not, come here to meet a woman to-day?"

Swipes saw that she was beginning to suspect that

Mrs. Bluster would be here to-day on purpose that I might tell you. Oh, why did I not suspect this before?"

The ingenuous Swipes played his part so well that the politician was completely deceived.

"Control your emotion, Swipes," he said. "Whom do you suspect of having played this trick?"

"Oh, do not ask me, do not ask me?" wailed the youth.

"But I will ask you, and I've got to know. Aha! I know who it was now! It was Noodleheimer himself, and he was here to-day to exult in the success of his infamous scheme. Am I not right, Swipes?"

"Do not ask me," cried Swipes, pretending to be suffering from the most intense emotion. "Would you have me betray my best friend?"

"Enough!" bawled Bluster; "I am answered. I'll go down to that saloon, and I won't leave enough of that Dutchman to hold an inquest on."

Then Swipes began to get in lots of the finest kind of fine work.

"Surely," he wailed, "you would not harm my beloved employer? Oh, why did I allow you to suspect, why—"

"That's all right, Swipes," interrupted Bluster. "Your feelings do you credit, but justice has got to be done."

However, I will see that your name is not mentioned, whatever happens."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Bluster," cried the youth, with an air of the utmost gratitude. "But I hope that you will not so far forget yourself as to inflict any bodily injury upon Mr. Noodleheimer."

But Mr. Bluster was gone, and Mrs. Bluster had followed him.

"Now that shows," mused or hero, "how hasty some people are. I didn't say a word against Mr. Noodleheimer, but just because I did not express myself quite correctly Mr. Bluster has got to go and get mad and threaten all sorts of dreadful things. Well, I hope nothing will happen to my kind employer, but if anything does I ought to be on hand, for I never saw a real murder, and I should like to, very, very much."

His soliloquy was here interrupted by the enraged proprietor of the establishment, who attempted to ignominiously eject him. But Swipes, seeing that he was not in a mood to be reasoned with, tripped him up in his most finished style, and, before he could arise to his feet, had vanished.

The youth then returned to Mr. Noodleheimer's saloon by a short cut, anxious to be on hand when Mr. Bluster should arrive.

When he entered the saloon Mr. Noodleheimer and the professor were engaged in earnest conversation.

"Here you vas, eh?" cried the old Teuton, wrath depicted on every line of his countenance.

"Der brofessor und me vas yoost peen dalking abowit you."

"Ah, indeed?" warbled Swipes. "And what have you been saying about me, may I ask?"

"Just this," howled the professor; "that you alone are responsible for the occurrence of this day, that the whole affair was a job put up by you, that forbearance has ceased to be a virtue, and that we are now determined to take the law into our own hands."

"Oh, gentlemen," shrieked Swipes. "is it possible that after all these years you do not know me better than to accuse me of such an infamous crime? Did it not occur to you to suspect that I was lured to that restaurant, as you were, by an anonymous note, and that the whole thing was a plan of Mr. Bluster to have what he calls fun?"

Noodleheimer and the professor stared at each other, and then at Swipes, hardly knowing whether to believe their senses or not.

"What reason have you for such a suspicion, Swipes?" demanded the latter.

"What reason?" cried the youth. "Do you need proof after all that has occurred? I, being the weakest and most defenseless of the party, was a made to suffer the most. Of course, if you two gentlemen had seen fit, you could have wiped him out of existence on the spot."

"Well, I should imagine so," returned the professor, swelling out his chest. "But we did not care to be mixed up in a common brawl of that sort."

"Dot vas der idea," added Mr. Noodleheimer. "I vas ein shentlemans, und not ein loafer like dot Pluster."

"But what happened after we left, Swipes?" inquired the professor, curiously.

"I was treated with unheard-of cruelty," replied Swipes. "But there is no time for explanations now."

"Why isn't there?" demanded Professor Gallus.

"Yah, vy der vas not?" added Noodleheimer. "Your dime vas mine, don'd it?"

"Very well," said Swipes, placidly, as he seated himself on the counter, "then I will just go ahead and tell you all that happened, and take as much time as I like about it, shall I?"

"Yah."

"Certainly," said the professor. "Your time is Mr. Noodleheimer's, as he has very justly remarked, and there is not the slightest occasion for haste."

"All right," said Swipes with a pleasant smile, "then I won't hurry in the least."

He began a long account of alleged occurrences at the restaurant, watching, meanwhile, for the appearance of

Mr. Bluster, whose residence, as the reader will remember, was directly opposite the saloon.

He had begun to fear that the infuriated husband had changed his mind about putting an untimely end to the professor and Mr. Noodleheimer, when he saw Bluster leave his house and shoot across the street with fire in his eye and a good-sized club in his hand.

"But I had better stop now," said the youth in conclusion, "for Mr. Bluster said he was coming round here to half knock the life out of both of you, and there he comes now."

The professor, who had been comfortably seated with his heels on a table, sprang to his feet, and Mr. Noodleheimer darted out from behind the counter with unwonted celerity.

"Vy you haf not dold dot pefore?" he demanded.

"Why, you said that I needn't hurry," replied Swipes, "and——"

He did not have a chance to finish the sentence, for at this moment Bluster came rushing in like a cyclone.

In about two minutes the saloon looked as if it had been struck by the most energetic sort of a blizzard. Tables were overturned, the floor was strewn with broken bottles and glasses, and Mr. Noodleheimer and Bluster were rolling about on the floor, pummeling each other to their hearts' content. As for the professor, he had dematerialized—in other words, he had thought it best for the happiness of all concerned to go elsewhere for a brief season and wait until the clouds should have rolled by, to some extent.

"There," said Bluster, presently, rising to his feet, "I guess I've taught you a lesson, you infernal, mischief-making Dutchman; but if you want any more, just send over to me and I'll accommodate you."

As he stalked out of the saloon Mr. Noodleheimer struggled to his feet. He had been pretty badly punished. He was bleeding at the nose with reckless abandon, and one of his eyes was closed for repairs.

"Schvipes," he said, as he leaned heavily on the counter.

"Yes, sir," responded the youth, in a silvery, child-like voice.

"I could haf licked dot loafer so dot he would not haf known my own name."

"Doubtless you could," responded Swipes, "but you did not care to, did you, Mr. Noodleheimer?"

"Nein. I would not soil my hands mit ein feller like dot; und I nefer allows no fighting py my saloon alretty."

"Well, I am glad that you decided to spare his life," said Swipes, seriously. "But, Mr. Noodleheimer, what was all the trouble about, anyhow?"

"Dot vas yoost vat I gannot understood. But I vill find me dot owit, you pet."

"Certainly you will, Mr. Noodleheimer."

"But, Schvipes."

"Yes, sir"

"Ven der brofessor gomes pack d3re vas no need dot you dell him abowit vat haf happened. Say to him dot I haf knocked der life owit of dot Pluster."

"All right, Mr. Noodleheimer."

"You vas a goot poy, Schvipes."

"Yes, sir."

"Schvipes, here is a qvarter for you."

"Thank you, sir. Mr. Noodleheimer?"

"Vell, Schvipes?"

"I feel worried about the professor."

"Vat abowit him, Schvipes?" asked the old man, with a look of surprise.

"I think he is drinking too much."

"I vas sure of dot, Schvipes; look at dot schlate der par behindt."

"It is not good for a man of his age to drink so much."

"Not if he gannot bay for dot."

"Well, I propose we try to scare him out of the habit?"

"How ve can do dot, Schvipes?"

"I'll tell you; you know the professor has always been terribly afraid of having the jim-jams."

"Yah."

"Well, we'll make him believe he has got 'em."

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed Mr. Noodleheimer. "Dot vas ein pully choke, Schvipes. Aber how ve can do dot?"

"I've got a little scheme in my mind; listen, and I'll explain it to you."

The old man listened, and Swipes, in his artless, child-like way, told him all about the new racket he had thought up.

"Dot vos a goot scheme, Schvipes," the saloon-keeper said, approvingly, "und I vas mit you."

It was late the following afternoon when Professor Gallus entered the saloon again, exclaiming, wearily:

"I am feeling very ill to-day. A little of my favorite medicine, Swipes. Why, good gracious! what's that?"

He pointed to a small green snake that lay curled up in the middle of the floor.

"What's what?" asked Swipes, with a look of surprise.

"That. Don't you see a snake lying there?"

"A snake? You are jesting, professor."

"No, I am not. Noodleheimer, you surely see the reptile?"

"Dot vas all foolishness, brofessor," returned the saloon-keeper. "Dere vas nodings dere alretty."

As the professor turned to Noodleheimer, Swipes pulled a string which was attached to the snake (a stuffed one that our hero had purchased at a taxidermist's), and yanked it out of sight.

"Why, certainly it is foolishness," he said. "There is nothing whatever there, professor, I assure you."

"It's gone!" cried the old man, drawing a long breath.

"Gone?" said Swipes. "Why, professor, it never was there. Tut, tut! this looks bad."

"Yah, brofessor," added Noodleheimer, "I vas afraid you vas got 'em at last, ain'd it?"

The professor's face was very pale as he said:

"This settles it. I have got to stop drinking. Not another drop of the stuff shall pass my lips, Noodleheimer."

"Dot vas all right, brofessor. I hope dot you stick py dot."

"I shall stick to it—depend upon that, Noodleheimer. Cicero Gallus is a man of iron will, and when he makes a resolution he always adheres to it."

And the old man stalked out of the saloon.

"Dot vas der pest choke of der season, Schvipes," chuckled the saloon-keeper. "I vonder ven ve'll see der brofessor vonce again."

"Oh, he'll be around before many hours," said Swipes. "He can't overcome that thirst of his all at once."

Early the next morning, which was Sunday, Professor Gallus again presented himself at the saloon. Mr. Noodleheimer was a law-abiding citizen, and did no business on Sunday, but he and Swipes were in the saloon, and the professor had no difficulty in gaining admission.

"Noodleheimer," he began, "I must ask for a little more of my usual beverage. This will be the last time, but this morning I am very ill."

"You look it," commented Swipes, as he placed the bottle before the old man. "Have you seen any more snakes?"

The professor shuddered.

"No, and I trust that I never shall again."

"You are taking big chances in indulging in that drink."

"Yah, dot vas so," added Noodleheimer.

"Nonsense!" said the professor, with a forced laugh, but it was easy to see that he was very nervous. "Noodleheimer," he went on, "I have called around to see if you would like to go to church with me."

"Vy, seertainly, brofessor."

"Can I go, too?" asked Swipes.

"Yah, if you vant to."

Half an hour later the trio were seated in a pew in a neighboring church, listening to the eloquent remarks of a popular clergyman.

Suddenly the entire congregation was startled by an ear-piercing shriek from the professor. Glancing at the floor, he had seen the much-dreaded snake on the carpet at his feet.

"Take it away, take it away!" he howled, in a voice that could have been heard a block.

The minister stopped his sermon, ladies shrieked, men

sprang to their feet, and the sexton rushed forward, seized the old man and "bounced" him in a neat and expeditious manner.

And during this painful scene Swipes sat with a look of funereal gloom on his fair young face.

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLE AHEAD FOR NOODLEHEIMER.

It was certainly very wrong in Swipes to take that stuffed snake to church and place it on the floor just where the nervous and excitable Professor Gallus would be sure to see it. We can offer no justification for such a high-handed act, and would gladly pass over the events of that morning in silence; but as we have undertaken to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, about our hero, we must omit nothing, no matter how harrowing it may be to our feelings to pen the record of his misdoings.

The professor did not permit himself to be ejected without a struggle. He fought with the sexton all the way up the aisle, and protested in vigorous English against the outrage to which he was being subjected, much to the horror of the devout and the amusement of the ungodly who were present.

"I tell you," shrieked the old man, when he and the sexton reached the door, "there is a snake in that pew, and if you'll come back with me I'll prove it."

"There's more of the same kind in your boots, I imagine," returned the official. "A man of your age ought to be ashamed to attend a church in such a state."

"You let go of my collar and I'll show you what kind of a state I'm in," howled the unlucky professor.

By this time they had reached the door, and it chanced that a policeman was passing, to whom the sexton promptly handed over his unfortunate victim.

Professor Gallus was by this time thoroughly aroused, as may be imagined, and he showed fight. This gave the officer a good excuse to club him, and he indulged in that amusement to his heart's content, and soon reduced his prisoner to a state of submission.

While the professor was being dragged off to a dungeon cell, an interesting and exciting scene was going on inside the church.

All might have gone well with Mr. Noodleheimer had it not been for his keen, but in this case unfortunate, sense of the ludicrous.

When anything struck Mr. Noodleheimer as being funny, he was accustomed to laugh vociferously, and when he once began to laugh he was liable to continue doing so for an indefinite length of time, and nothing short of an earthquake or the fall of a house could stop him.

Furthermore, Mr. Noodleheimer's laugh was not of the silvery variety which it is a pleasure to listen to, nor was it one of the quiet kind which cannot be heard without an ear-trumpet. No artificial aid to hear his expression of mirth was ever needed.

When he really let himself out and laughed for all he was worth, the earth trembled and timid people fled to the mountain for safety.

The present was one of the occasions when he did let himself out. It struck him as very, very funny that Professor Gallus should be thus ignominiously ejected from the church, and he leaned back in the pew and gave vent to sounds that drowned the utterances of the preacher, and forced him to stop with horror written all over his face.

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the old man again and again. "Dot vas der pulliest choke efer I haf heardt. Dot vas ein on der brofessor. Haw, haw, haw!"

And Swipes sat with such a shocked look on his young face that every one who saw him felt awfully sorry for him.

We need not state, however, that their sympathy was wasted, and that although the youth looked as if he were chief mourner at a funeral, he was having lots of fun all by himself. He had not expected any such scene as this,

or perhaps he would not have brought the snake to church, but since the scene had come he was just the one who could enjoy it.

"Put that man out!" roared the clergyman. "Such a scene in this place is disgraceful."

The sexton had by this time returned, flushed and triumphant, from his struggle with the professor, and he was in just the mood for another contest. He dragged Mr. Noodleheimer from his seat, and the two started up the aisle together, the old man still laughing—he was by this time unable to stop himself—and the sexton purple with rage.

Mr. Noodleheimer did not give his captor as much trouble as the professor had, and he was very quickly landed upon the sidewalk outside. There being no policeman in sight this time, he was permitted to go home.

In the meantime Swipes remained in his seat, looking so sanctimonious and sorrowful that he made every one who looked at him feel very, very sad.

"This is the first time that a disturbance of any kind has taken place in this church," said the minister,

"She is dead, too."

"And those men—they kidnapped you, did they not?" cried the old lady, eagerly, thinking that she scented a first-class "sensation."

"I don't like to tell," sniveled Swipes, thinking that if she was so anxious to make a fuss it would be a pity to disappoint her.

"I see it all now!" cried she.

"Do you, ma'am?"

"Yes. They kidnapped you long ago, and have kept you imprisoned ever since. To-day you insisted upon attending divine worship. Your pleas melted their hearts, and they consented. I have heard of just such a case before."

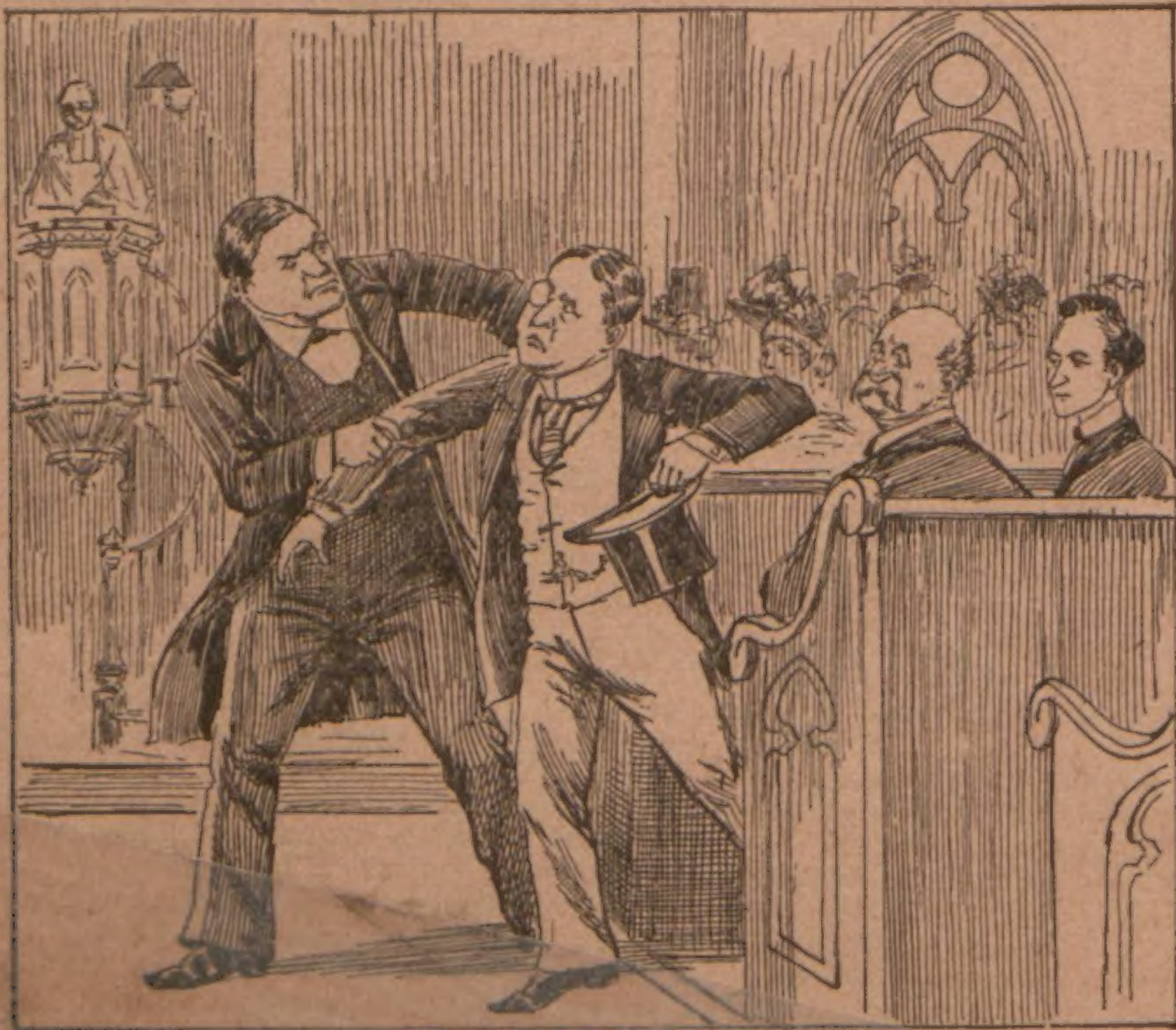
"You've got it pretty nearly straight," said Swipes, with a very serious expression of countenance. "Would you like to know all?"

"Yes, indeed; very, very much."

"And you will promise not to betray me."

"Yes, yes. Go on, go on."

Swipes gazed about him with an expression of counte-



THE SEXTON SEIZED PROFESSOR GALLUS AND "BOUNCED" HIM IN A NEAT AND EXPEDITIOUS MANNER.

severely, "and I trust it will be the last. The man who would set such an example to an innocent child cannot be too strongly condemned. We will now resume the service."

As the "innocent child" referred to was Swipes, all eyes were turned upon that youth, who saw fit to commence weeping bitterly, but noiselessly, at once.

The sermon proceeded, but the minister was evidently all broken up, and his discourse was brought to a close in a very few minutes.

In the meantime Swipes heard such comments on all sides as: "Poor little fellow!" "Isn't it an awful shame?" "Doesn't he look heart-broken?" and the like.

After the sermon a number of the good people present came up to the youth with expressions of sympathy and inquiries as to the identity of his late companions.

But his replies were very guarded, for he thought the joke had gone about far enough.

"Was either of those bold, bad men your papa?" inquired an elderly lady with corkscrew curls, and an air of intense severity.

"No, ma'am," replied Swipes, "my papa is dead."

"And your mamma?"

nance that would have caused a cigar-store Indian to shed tears.

"Well, I will tell you all. But first——"

"Yes, yes."

"First I must be sure that those bold, bad men are out of the way."

"Of course, of course!" cried the old lady.

"I had better step to the door and see if they are really and truly gone."

"Yes, I think you had."

"It is possible that they may be waiting for me outside with drawn revolvers; and therefore I consider it wise to see them myself first."

"You are a noble boy."

"Yes'm. Just wait here till I get back, will you?"

"Why, certainly."

It is to be hoped that the old lady did not mean exactly what she said, or that she did not carry her resolution into effect; for if she did she must be standing there now. For Swipes did not return. He concluded that it would be better for the happiness of all concerned if he remained away for a few years; and therefore as soon as he reached

the door of the sacred edifice he "lit out" and has not been seen in that neighborhood since.

On his return to the saloon he found Mr. Noodleheimer seated in the back room, still laughing.

"Py shimminy cracious, Schwipes," he ejaculated, "dot vas der pest chokes efer I haf seen. I pet you der professor vill get sent by der Island for six months. Haw, haw, haw!"

"I fear so, Mr. Noodleheimer," said Swipes, seriously; "but I fail to see anything amusing in the affair. On the contrary, I feel very anxious about the professor."

"Vat you vas gifin' me, Swipes? It vill do der oldt professor goot to go oop by dot Island. I pet you dot vas der pest dings dot efer happened py him."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" shouted the familiar voice of the professor, as the old man rushed into the room, his face flushed with anger. "I did not expect this from you, Noodleheimer."

"Hello, professor, vas dot you?" exclaimed Mr. Noodleheimer, in surprise. "How you haf got pack so quick, alretty?"

"Vat I could do?" demanded the old man. "Py chimminy, I vas veak so like a papy from laffin'."

"Yes, I know you were."

"Dot vas der pest chokes of der season;" and Mr. Noodleheimer again indulged in manifestations of mirth.

"Laugh on, laugh on," said the professor, fiercely. "It will be my turn to laugh next."

"Vat you mean py dot?"

"Never mind," returned the professor, mysteriously; "but remember one thing—Cicero Gallus is a man who never forgets."

The terrible meaning with which the old professor invested these words, and the significant glances that accompanied them, were lost upon Mr. Noodleheimer.

"Dot vas all right, professor," he said. "Py cracious, I vas got to laff efery dime I dinks abowit dot choke. Haw, haw, haw!"

And, shaking with laughter, the old man waddled out of the saloon.

"Yes, it is very funny," said the professor, gloomily;



A SIGHT MET NOODLEHEIMER'S EYES THAT CAUSED HIM TO START BACK WITH AN EXCLAMATION OF AMAZEMENT.

"Cicero Gallus holds his liberty too dear to surrender it without a struggle," was the haughty reply. "Just before we reached the station-house I managed to trip the officer up. While he was getting on his feet again I darted into the hall-way of a tenement house which we had been in the act of passing, and closed and locked the door."

"Pully, for you, professor."

"Oh, the dungeon does not exist that could hold Cicero Gallus. I rushed through the hall-way and into the back yard, while the officer was attempting to effect an entrance to the house. I scaled the fence, gained the street, and in a few moments was out of harm's way."

"But the policeman may come here for you," suggested Swipes.

"No, he won't; he does not know me from Adam. The chances are I shall never see him again. Noodleheimer."

"Vell, professor?"

"I am not at all pleased with your conduct this morning. If you had stood by me I might have been spared all the annoyance and inconvenience to which I was subjected."

"but the laugh will be on you ere long if I mistake not, my friend."

Swipes saw that the old man was thoroughly aroused, and he determined to profit by the fact, if possible.

"You have had a hard time this morning, have you not, Professor Gallus?" he said, sympathetically.

"A hard time!" shouted the professor. "Well, I should say I had. But I know who is at the bottom of the whole affair."

"Indeed? I do not quite catch your meaning. Whom do you suspect?"

"You know well enough who I suspect. I have been thinking the whole thing over, and I see plainly that it was all a job put up by Noodleheimer to place me in an embarrassing position. That snake was put there by him, and I did not have the jim-jams then any more than I have them now. You know this to be a fact, Swipes, for you were in the joke. Am I not right?"

"I don't like to tell," whined Swipes.

"Fear nothing, Swipes. I have no doubt that Noodleheimer forced you to take the part you did in the affair. I could see by your face that you sympathized with me!"

"Of course I did, professor."

"Well, never mind; I shall find a way to get even with the old man. The next time the laugh will be on him, as I just told him."

"What are you going to do, professor?"

"I don't know yet. If I thought I could trust you——"

"Why, professor," interrupted Swipes, with a hurt look, "don't you know that you can?"

"That's right."

"Now, Swipes, I am determined to retaliate upon Noodleheimer by playing him a trick he will never forget, but as yet I have been unable to think of anything. You have considerable ingenuity in that line; perhaps you can help me."

"Well, perhaps I can, professor," said the youth, seeing that there might be a good deal of fun in the scheme. "I will try to think up some scheme, and if you'll drop in to-morrow noon, while Mr. Noodleheimer is out to lunch, we can compare notes."

"I will do so, Swipes. And now I must leave you, for I am thoroughly fatigued after the exciting events of the day."

And the old man meandered out.

"It'll be queer," mused Swipes, with a meditative look, "if I can't get a good deal of sport out of this situation. Let me think! what sort of a racket shall I work?"

When he went to bed that night the youth had not thought up a scheme. He had never had so much trouble in planning a "racket" before, and he began to fear that his inventive powers were failing.

But the next morning he had an inspiration, and it occurred thusly:

Soon after he had opened the saloon, and while he stood gazing pensively out of the window, Mr. Hemorrhage, the reporter, entered.

"Hello, Swipes," was his greeting, "what new deviltry are you hatching now?"

"Why do you ask such a question, Mr. Hemorrhage?" inquired our hero with dignity.

"Because I always know, when I see that under-the-daisies expression on your face, that you have got some sort of a job on hand. But never mind; keep it to yourself, if you want to, and hand over my private bottle."

As he poured out a liberal allowance of his favorite beverage the reporter gazed about him with a look of disgust and continued his remarks:

"Swipes, this is the slowest place I ever struck. I don't see how the old man Noodleheimer gets a living out of it. I never see any one in here. It's more like a morgue than a beer saloon."

"We pride ourselves on that fact, Mr. Hemorrhage," said Swipes.

"Oh, you do, eh? Well, it's all right, if you're satisfied. I don't believe there were ever half a dozen people here together since the place was started. It's the slowest establishment of the kind in town."

This remark brought to Swipes' mind the story of one of the pranks of an eminent practical joker, which he had once read, and he instantly determined that he would play the same trick, with variations.

"I'll bet you five dollars," he said, "that inside of four days I will make it the liveliest place in town."

"Done!" responded Hemorrhage, promptly. "What's your scheme, Swipes?"

"Come around in five days—next Saturday morning—and you'll find out."

"I'll be here, and if you win the bet I'll pay up promptly, for I'm in luck nowadays."

And the reporter skipped out.

When Professor Gallus came in at noon Swipes explained his new plot in detail.

"I'm with you," said the old man, enthusiastically. "Between us we'll make the street too hot to hold Noodleheimer."

"Yes," murmured Swipes, thoughtfully, "and it may be slightly warm for you, too."

At eight o'clock the next Saturday morning, just after Noodleheimer's arrival, Professor Gallus and Mr. Hemorrhage strolled into the saloon together. Swipes was polishing the mirror behind the bar, and there was such a thoughtful, far-away look on his face that it seemed im-

possible to believe that he had a colossal scheme on hand. Just a moment after the entrance of the two men a ton of coal was dumped on the sidewalk outside.

"Vat is der meaning of dot?" cried Noodleheimer, as he hurried out from behind the bar. "I haf me no goal ordered alretty."

He stepped to the door, but as he opened it a sight met his eyes that caused him to start back with an exclamation of amazement and horror.

The sidewalk was blocked with people who seemed to have suddenly sprung out of the earth, and every one of them was loaded down with merchandise of some sort.

"Here's your dorg, Mr. Noodleheimer," said a tramp, who was leading a care-worn looking mongrel by a rope about as thick as his body. "Ain't he a lah-lah?"

"Where'll I put this parrot?" inquired a boy, exhibiting a cage containing a bird with a bold, wicked eye, which greeted Mr. Noodleheimer with:

"Ah, there, Dutch!"

"There's four dollars to collect on dese t'ings," remarked a youth, as he elbowed his way through the crowd with a big basket of groceries.

Just then a delegation of forty or fifty other individuals, each the bearer of some article or articles of use or ornament hove in sight, and four truck-loads of furniture and an undertaker's wagon drove up to the door.

"Goot cracious!" gasped the excited German, "vas you all grazzy, or vas I?"

CHAPTER IV.

A DUEL TO THE DEATH.

Mr. Noodleheimer's face was a picture as he stood gazing at the rapidly increasing crowd of men, women, children, animals, and vehicles. The street in front of the saloon was blocked with wagons, and the sidewalk was covered with people of all ages, sizes, colors, and nationalities, all talking to the bewildered Dutchman at once.

"Say, where does this coffin go?" inquired the undertaker's man, as he and a companion elbowed their way through the crowd, lugging a casket big enough for a full-sized giant.

"How de mischiefs vas I going to told you dot?" roared Mr. Noodleheimer. "Vat is der meaning of dis?"

"Ain't this Noodleheimer's saloon?" demanded the undertaker, fiercely.

"Yah."

"Then this is all right, Mr. Noodleheimer is dead, and this is his coffin. Where is the body?"

"It vas right here," shrieked the old man, wildly. "I vas Noodleheimer, und I vas no more dead as you are."

"Here's de cat you sent for, Mr. Noodleheimer," interposed a seedy looking man, with an artistically colored nose, as he forced his way to the saloon door.

In his arms he carried an elderly cat that had evidently seen much trouble, for its face wore an expression of intense weariness, which the brightness and animation that surrounded it seemed powerless to dispel. It was a cat that had plainly seen much of life, and had arrived at the conclusion that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

"Ain't he handsome?" inquired the man, as he held the animal by the nape of the neck. "He's got blue blood in him, he has. Oh, this is just the cat you're looking for, Mr. Noodleheimer, and make no mistake."

"I would not haf dot cat if you give me to him," howled the old man, excitedly. "Dake him away."

"You won't have him?"

"Nein."

And Mr. Noodleheimer made several remarks about the cat's personal appearance in his native tongue.

The man did not understand German, but the animal evidently did, for he made a sudden spring from his owner's arms and lit on the old saloon-keeper's head.

Mr. Noodleheimer set up a howl that could have been heard at the distance of half a mile as the cat fixed its claws in his scalp. But the animal did not let go until it had inscribed a map of the Southern States on the old

ze. Then he slid down and rushed up the street, pursued by his owner.

The meantime the crowd had been steadily increasing. A doctor came hurrying up, demanded to see the who had been shot in the saloon, and was highly when he learned that his patient was only a

about the same time a clergyman appeared on the and announced that he had come in response to a to officiate at Mr. Noodleheimer's funeral.

were now butchers, bakers, grocers, caterers, merchants, ice-men, furniture dealers, hatters, shoe-milliners, in short, representatives of about half the city assembled in front of the saloon, turning to the half-distracted Mr. Noodleheimer at

And Swipes, Hemorrhage, and the professor were in, getting "dead loads" of fun out of the affair.

"Ain't this great?" inquired the youth, cheerfully.

"I should say it was," grinned the reporter. "Here's your money, Swipes. But Noodleheimer will crush the out of you if he finds out that you are at the bottom

how is he going to find out? You will not give me

Swipes, you may depend upon me."

and the professor won't, I know, for he had as much with the racket as I did—more, in fact, for he wrote letters to all these people, telling them to come here."

Swipes," said the old man. "I will not betray But what is that man saying?"

The individual referred to was an Irishman in the crowd, who was addressing his companions with considerable warmth.

"Do yez know what Oi t'ink?" he demanded. "Oi be-lieve is all a job put up by that Dootchman, an' Oi want that we clane his place out."

"We'll do it!" yelled half a dozen men in the crowd.

"re yez all wid me?" continued the Irishman, his eyes shining at the prospect of a "scrimmage."

"We are!" returned fully two-thirds of the men present.

"Thin come an."

They "came an," and down went Mr. Noodleheimer, who attempted to prevent their entrance.

In about thirty seconds the saloon was filled with a howling mob.

"Bring in the Dootchman," roared the Irishman, "an' make him open a keg of beer for the crowd."

Mr. Noodleheimer was borne in on the shoulders of several of his unwelcome guests, and ordered, on pain of death, to tap the keg. Seeing that he had no alternative, he consented to do so.

But when he called upon Swipes to assist him that youth was nowhere to be seen. It was the professor

Mr. Hemorrhage

The three companions had been waiting outside the door, and had a

several of the crowd had been waiting outside the door, and had a

the keg in place, and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

and empty keg in place, and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

is vas oille!" yelled the Irishman, "an' make him open a keg of beer for the crowd."

put up py me, and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

lord tollar, and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

that's all right, and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

ght the dog, as he filed out with the others, and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

having consumed a large quantity of beer, more and more, and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

"Yer put up the keg, an' now yer got off, and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

See!" and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

then at last the place was cleared, and it dispersed, several of the crowd, headed by an

"You told me dot und I vill gif you feefty tollars," bawled Mr. Noodleheimer. "If I find me owit who dot loofer vas, I vill knock him py der middle of der veek before last."

It was so plain that the old man's indignation was genuine that his hearers were convinced at once.

"This matter ought to be investigated," thundered the undertaker. "It is evident, Mr. Noodleheimer, that you have been the victim of an infamous trick."

"I shouldn't say so. Look vonce at dot empty peer keg und dose proken glasses."

"An investigation ought to be instituted."

"I vill constitute dot investigation bretty plamed quick, und don'd you forgot dot neider."

At this point the door of the back room opened, and Swipes, Professor Gallus, and Mr. Hemorrhage entered the saloon.

The latter two individuals endeavored to look as unconscious as possible, but only partially succeeded. Swipes, however, wore an expression so innocent and child-like that the hearts of the visitors were touched as soon as they glanced at him, and there was not one of them who would not have taken up the cudgel in his defense, if any one had dared accuse him of being the prime mover in the trick of which they had all been the victims.

"My dear Mr. Noodleheimer," went on the undertaker, "these gentlemen and myself have all received letters directing us to come here at a certain hour this morning, with our wares, and we have obeyed the summons. I, for my part, had a coffin made expressly for you, all the measurements being given in the communication which I received. Every one of these communications, with the exception of the one received by me, were signed with your name, so if you can find the perpetrator of the alleged joke you can have him tried for forgery."

"Oh," cried Swipes, stepping behind the bar and taking his place by Mr. Noodleheimer's side, "is it possible that any human being could be so base?"

"What a nerve that boy has got!" murmured Hemorrhage, admiringly.

"Of course it is a difficult thing for a child like you to realize," said the undertaker, patting Swipes on the head with a paternal air, "but it is, nevertheless, a fact that such persons do exist. Here, Mr. Noodleheimer, is the letter I received. Perhaps you can identify the handwriting."

And he handed the saloon-keeper the communication in question. The old man unfolded it and glanced at it. At the same moment Swipes, who was looking over his shoulder, saw the professor

do you not recognize that hand-

"Why, it is the handwriting of the professor," cried Noodleheimer.

"I don't know," said Swipes, "but I don't like the look of it."

inquired the professor while Swipes

hage while Swipes

not observed

"Vat is der madder? I vill show you quick right away vat is der madder!" howled the infuriated Teuton.

One glance at his face showed Professor Gallus that his part of the scheme was discovered. Believing discretion to be the better part of valor, he made a grand rush for the door, with the old German close at his heels. A moment later they were both running down the street at the top of their speed.

"Well, Swipes," said Hemorrhage, "I've got money that says you put old man Noodleheimer onto that. You are a terror, Swipes. You have got enough gall for two reporters. I could not say more."

"You wrong me," said the youth, with a hurt look. "If I had had any idea that Mr. Noodleheimer would offer the professor violence I would not have dropped the hint that I did."

"Oh, you ~~admitted~~ that you did drop a hint, do you? Well, I can tell you one thing; if I had had any idea you were going to work any such racket as this, I

and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

and the crowd was waiting outside the door, and had a

"I know it is," responded Swipes, as he gazed sadly around him, "and I regret it as deeply as you do. But here comes Mr. Noodleheimer."

As he spoke the old man entered the saloon, bleeding profusely from the nose.

"Dot loofer haf escaped me alretty," he said; "but I pet you I vill be efen mit him pooty qvick. Dot vas der plamedest drick efer I haf heardt of."

"Yes," said Swipes, as he gazed around him with a shocked expression of countenance, "I think the professor went too far. As you know, Mr. Noodleheimer, I do not object to a harmless little joke myself once in a while, but this affair is simply an outrage. I had no idea that Professor Gallus could be so bold and bad."

"Vell, I pet you he will be sorry for me ven I catch him, ain'd it?" thundered Noodleheimer. "Shoost look at dot saloon. Vasn't dot offle?"

"It is, indeed, a very painful sight," said Swipes, "and it will cost you large money to repair the damage. Mr. Noodleheimer, you have been grossly insulted."

"You vas right, Schvipes."

"In my opinion there is but one course open to you in this matter."

"Vat you mean, Schvipes?"

"I mean—and I think Mr. Hemorrhage will agree with me—that you ought to challenge the professor to mortal combat."

"Vat is dot?" inquired the old man, with a bewildered look.

"Why, I mean that you and he ought to fight a duel. That is the only way in which such an affair can be settled by gentlemen."

"Nonsense!" interrupted Hemorrhage. "There's no need of anything of the sort. The idea is absurd."

"Vell, I don'd know," said Mr. Noodleheimer, reflectively. "I vill dink me dot madder ofer. Und now I vas going home. Clean der blace oop, qvick right away, Schvipes."

"Yes, sir."

"Now what the mischief put it into your head to suggest a duel?" asked Hemorrhage, when the old man had gone. "Do you want those two old lunatics to kill each other?"

"Certainly not," said Swipes. "What did you want to interfere for, and try to spoil the sport, Mr. Hemorrhage? We can get lots of fun out of this duel."

"How?"

"Why, I don't mean to let them hurt each other; I only want to scare the professor a little."

"Oh, the laugh is to be on him this time, is it?"

"Yes; it's his turn now. He's had loads of amusement to-day out of Mr. Noodleheimer, and it's time now that the tables were turned."

"Oh, you're going to let Noodleheimer into the scheme, are you?"

"Yes. Now let me explain the thing to you, and then see if you don't want to go in with me."

"All right," laughed the reporter, when Swipes had given him an outline of his plot. "I'm with you. When shall we commence operations?"

"Right away, of course."

That evening Professor Gallus was surprised by a visit from Swipes.

"What brings you here?" he asked in surprise, as the youth entered his room.

"A very painful errand, I regret to say," replied Swipes, with a serious face. "I am the bearer of a challenge."

"A challenge! from whom?"

"From Mr. Noodleheimer. He feels aggrieved about the incidents of to-day, and thinks he would feel better if he had your gore. He has often heard you tell about the numerous duels you have fought in your younger days, and he feels sure that you will eagerly grasp this opportunity to make a corpse of him."

The professor looked anything but happy as he replied: "I did not think the old man had courage to fight a duel."

"Oh, you don't know Mr. Noodleheimer, if you think him lacking in courage. Well, do you accept?"

"I do," replied the professor, after a few moments' tation.

"Good. I suppose your weapons will be pistols?"

"Yes."

"Good again. There is a very quiet place up by High Bridge, that would be just the spot for such an affair. I am to be Mr. Noodleheimer's second, and I would suggest that you select Mr. Hemorrhage as yours."

"Hemorrhage will do as well as any one else, I suppose," said the professor.

"Certainly he will. And now I guess I'll go around and see him and arrange things, so that you and Mr. Noodleheimer can slay each other in a nice, quiet, effectual, gentlemanly way."

With these cheerful words the youth vanished.

To make a long story short, the two men met at about noon the next day at the spot suggested by Swipes.

The professor was amazed at Noodleheimer's calm, unconcerned manner. He had not given him credit for possessing as much bravery as he apparently manifested.

The fact is that the old German knew that neither of the pistols was loaded, so he was quite easy in his mind.

Not so the professor, however. He was very, very nervous, though he tried his best to conceal the fact.

The men took their positions, Swipes gave the word to fire, and two simultaneous shots awoke the echoes.

The next moment, to Professor Gallus' horror, Mr. Noodleheimer fell heavily to the ground, where he remained motionless.

"Good Heaven!" shrieked Swipes, bending over him. "he is dead! Make your escape, professor, ere it is too late."

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THE DUEL.

Professor Gallus stood as if rooted to the spot, gazing at the body of his supposed victim.

"Fly, fly!" continued Swipes, excitedly. "You are a red-handed assassin, professor, and if arrested will surely be convicted and sentenced to an ignominious death. Am I not right, Mr. Hemorrhage?"

"I fear so, Swipes," replied the reporter, with a very serious face. "Professor Gallus, you have gotten yourself into a bad scrape."

"But, good gracious!" cried the professor, "I didn't mean to kill him. Why, I aimed over his head."

"That is doubtless why you hit him," said Swipes. "If you had aimed at his head he would now be alive."

"But are you sure he is really dead?" asked the old man, a ray of hope irradiating his face. "Perhaps he is only stunned."

"No, your bullet went directly through his brain," said Swipes. "He died instantly."

"Of course he did," added Hemorrhage. "And now, professor, as a friend I would advise you to make yourself scarce. If you are discovered it will go hard with you. Hark! I think I hear some one coming."

This was enough for the professor. Without another word he turned and ran at the top of his speed. In a few moments he had disappeared round a turn in the road.

When he was well out of sight Noodleheimer slowly arose, his frame convulsed with laughter.

"Dot vas der pulliest choke of der age," he said. "Py cracious, it vas hardt yerk to lie dere und keep qvick. I vas offle full of laff, now you pet. Haw, haw, haw!"

And the old man indulged in one of his characteristic laughs.

"So I should imagine," said Swipes, his face as serious as if he had just returned from a funeral. "But I can help wondering what the professor will do."

"I don't care vat der mischief he does, if he st away from mine saloon," said Noodleheimer.

"Well, I feel a good deal worried about him," asserted Swipes. "How can we tell what he may do?"

"You feel worried about him, do you?" said Hemorrhage.

rhage, with evident incredulity. "What do you suppose he will do?"

"He may destroy himself."

"Old man Gallus destroy himself? Not much!" returned the reporter, scornfully. "He isn't built that way."

"Vell, I don'd know abowit dot," said Mr. Noodleheimer, beginning to look worried.

Swipes saw that he had made an impression, and he lost no time in following up his advantage.

"I don't see how you can speak so heartlessly, Mr. Hemorrhage," he said, "Mr. Noodleheimer evidently knows the professor much better than you do. Just imagine his feelings at this moment. Far away from home and friends, believing that he is guilty of the murder of the man he loved better than all else on earth, without the price even of a drink in his pocket—there is no knowing to what lengths he may go. Why, the situation is an awful one!"

And Swipes pretended to wipe away a tear.

"Rats!" interposed Hemorrhage. "What new scheme are you trying to work now, Swipes?"

Mr. Hemorrhage go home, and I will hunt up Professor Gallus myself."

"All right, Schvipes."

"And now you and Mr. Hemorrhage had better streak it for the railroad depot. A train leaves the High Bridge station in ten minutes, and it is quite a walk."

"You vas right, Schvipes. Come along, Hemorrhage."

"Now, for Heaven's sake, Swipes, what is your racket this time?" whispered the reporter to the youth. "Are you going to hunt up old Gallus, and slay him in cold blood?"

"Certainly not," replied Swipes, with a pained look. "I don't see how you can talk like that to me, an innocent little child, who only has the good of his kind at heart?"

"Well, s'long," said Hemorrhage. "I'm sorry for the professor, when you find him."

"Goot-py, Schvipes," said Mr. Noodleheimer, who looked a good deal worried. "Dis vas der last dime I vill efer haf somedings to do py ein bractical choke."

"A wise resolution, sir," returned the youth, respectfully. "Well, au revoir. Be careful not to get run over."



THE NEXT MOMENT, TO PROFESSOR GALLUS' HORROR, MR. NOODLEHEIMER FELL HEAVILY TO THE GROUND.

"Schvipes vas right, py cracious!" interposed Mr. Noodleheimer; "dot vas a pad peezeness."

"Why, certainly it is," went on the youth. "Just think for a moment of the fix that you'd be in if he committed suicide. The law would be sure to hold you responsible."

"Do you dink so, Schvipes?"

"I know so," replied our hero, winking to the reporter to keep quiet. "Your position in that case would be a terrible one, Mr. Noodleheimer."

"Vat is to be done, Schvipes? Py chimminy, I vish I hat not let you make me put dis chob oop py der profes-sor."

"Why, how can you talk like that?" cried Swipes, with a shocked look. "You know I disapproved of it from the first. But never mind that. The professor ought to be allowed."

"Yah," said Mr. Noodleheimer, eagerly. "Dot vas ein idea. I vill follow him."

"No, no," interposed Swipes. "That vill not do. Why, the sight of you, the man whom he believes he has assassinated, might have a fatal effect on him. No, you and

Noodleheimer and his companion hurried off in the direction of the railroad station.

"Now," mused Swipes, "this may be all for nothing. Perhaps I can't find the professor after all, and if I do, maybe there won't be any chance for fun. But I'll trust to luck, and it doesn't very often go back on me."

It did not this time.

Swipes sauntered up the road in the direction in which Professor Gallus had disappeared, which was the opposite one to that in which Noodleheimer and Hemorrhage had gone.

He had gone about half a mile, and had about made up his mind that the professor had gotten too much of a start, and that he should have to give up the chase as a bad job, when he heard a low whistle.

He looked all around him, but saw no one. But the next minute the whistle was repeated, and then a low voice cried:

"Swipes!"

The sound came from over his head. He looked up and beheld the old professor seated on one of the topmost branches of a tall oak.

The sight would have made most people laugh, but Swipes only looked the more serious as he asked:

"Is that you, professor?"

"Don't you see it is I?" demanded the old man, pettishly.

"I thought it was. Taking a little rest up there, professor?"

"I am here for safety. Are the minions of the law on my track yet, Swipes?"

"Not yet."

"Be assured of one thing, Swipes—Cicero Gallus will sell his life dearly."

"Oh, that's all right, professor."

"What's all right?" demanded the old man, eagerly.

"What do you mean, Swipes?"

"I have much to tell you," said Swipes, "but if I shout it as I should be obliged to, to make you hear up there there's no knowing who else might hear it. Come down."

"I will do so, Swipes," and the old man began scrambling down the tree.

As Swipes watched him he could not help wondering how he had ever gotten to the top of the tree, he was so clumsy. When he was within ten or a dozen feet of the ground he lost his grip and fell. Swipes hastened to pick him up, and discovered that he had not sustained any serious injury, although he was a good deal shaken up.

"Oh, this is an awful day!" groaned the old man.

"Why, oh, why, did I consent to fight that duel?"

"You would have been branded as a coward if you hadn't," Swipes reminded him.

"I'd rather have been branded as anything than be hung," wailed the professor.

"Well, it's a good deal a matter of taste," said Swipes.

"But don't be downcast, professor; Mr. Hemorrhage and I have arranged a plan to save you."

"You have, Swipes?"

"Why, certainly we have."

"What is it?"

"Well, we have disposed of the body, to begin with."

"Disposed of the body? How?" cried the old man.

"That is our secret. Now, when Noodleheimer's disappearance is noticed, it will be believed that he has run away, if Mr. Hemorrhage and I keep our mouths shut."

"Which you will do?"

"Certainly."

"Swipes, you are a true friend."

"Of course I am. You see the way Mr. Hemorrhage and I look at the matter is this: Mr. Noodleheimer fell in a duel; so it wasn't murder, after all."

"Of course it was not, Swipes."

"Then you didn't want to fight, anyhow?"

"Indeed, I did not."

"But he would have it, and he got it."

"Swipes, you look at this matter in a very sensible way."

"Of course I do. But, professor, I would not advise you to return to New York immediately."

"I suppose that is good advice, Swipes, but what else can I do? I have very little money with me."

"I have got some, but not much—only a few cents."

"I am half-starved, too," moaned the old man. "You see, I was so much excited this morning about the duel that I could not eat my breakfast, but now I am as hungry as a bear."

"Well, it must be about dinner-time round here. I wonder if we couldn't think up some scheme for working one of the neighbors for a dinner. I'm awful hungry myself."

"We might go and represent ourselves as a couple of tramps, and ask for a few mouthfuls."

"Naw," said Swipes, in a tone of disgust. "If we got anything, it would only be the leavings, and nothing but the best is good enough for me. Besides, the chances are that they would set the dog on us."

"That's so, Swipes."

"No. We want a dinner at the best table with the family, and we want the best of everything."

"Yes, we want them, but how are we going to get them?"

"Haven't you got ingenuity enough to think up some

scheme for beating one of the wealthy residents out of a square meal, professor?"

"I confess that I have not, Swipes. I fear that we shall have to go hungry."

"Not much we sha'n't," said Swipes. "You just wait a minute, and I will have a scheme ready."

For some moments the youth was silent. Then his young face brightened up, and he exclaimed:

"I have it!"

"You have what?"

"A scheme for getting a first-class dinner free of charge, and being treated like dukes."

"What is your plan?" asked the professor, curiously.

"It's a racket that has been worked before, but not in these parts, and it's dollars to cents that it'll be a big success."

Swipes then went on to explain all about his scheme.

"We'll try it," said the professor, when he had finished, "but I have my doubts as to whether we shall get a dinner or the grand bounce."

"We'll get the dinner fast enough," responded Swipes, smilingly. "Just you follow my directions, professor, and all will be well."

"Come on then. I'll take the chances, for I'm so hungry that I've got to have something to eat within a short time or die."

How Swipes and the professor secured their dinner, together with other facts connected with our hero and his victims, will be fully explained in a future story, entitled "SWIPES AND THE GHOSTS."

(THE END.)

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